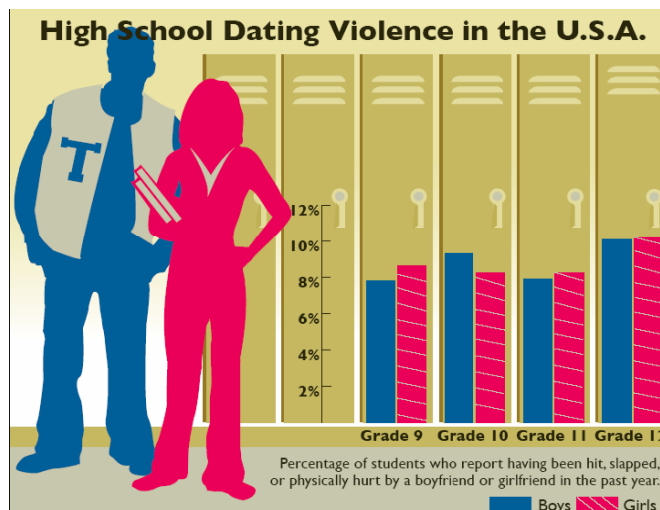


KDHE Launches 'Choose Respect' to Prevent Dating Abuse

'Choose Respect' - a new statewide initiative aimed at reducing the incidence of violence or rape among teenagers - has been launched in partnership between the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The Choose Respect initiative aims to help adolescents develop healthy relationships by offering positive messages about giving and getting respect.

Respect for others within teenage relationships is a significant public health concern. A recent study published in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Morbidity and Mortality Report (MMWR) used examined data from CDC's 2003 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) to evaluate the link between physical dating violence and selected behaviors that can place adolescents' health and well-being at risk.



About 1 in 11 American high school students reports physical dating violence each year. The risk of being a victim is similar for both boys and girls across all grade levels. To learn more, visit www.chooserespect.org.

According to the report, one in 11 high school students reported physical dating violence victimization in the past 12 months equating to nearly 1.5 million high school students a year. (The 2005 Kansas Youth Risk Behavior Survey notes that 1 in 12 high school students reported having been physically forced to have sexual intercourse). The CDC study notes that adolescents who report being hit, slapped, or physically hurt by a boyfriend or girlfriend in the past year are more likely to report binge drinking, suicide attempts, physical fighting and current sexual activity.

"These numbers show that the effects of dating abuse go beyond physical injury," said Dr. Howard Rodenberg, Director of KDHE's Division of Health. "It's an issue that affects the overall health and well-being of adolescents. That's why we're taking action not only to reduce the immediate consequences of this behavior, but also to prevent the long-term effects dating abuse can have on the health of our youth."

To help change this situation, KDHE is implementing the Choose Respect initiative. KDHE's efforts are part of a broad national initiative developed by the CDC to help adolescents form healthy relationships and prevent dating abuse before it starts.

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Research shows that reaching adolescents early – even before they start to date – is an important step in preventing dating abuse. As adolescents grow, they learn behaviors that will shape future relationships. The Choose Respect initiative aims to help adolescents develop healthy relationships by offering positive messages about giving and getting respect.

“Relationships can be one of the best - and most challenging - parts of an adolescent’s world. Our investment in the Choose Respect initiative is an investment in a healthy future for adolescents,” Rodenberg said. “We are capitalizing on the positive power of teens using the one rule we can all follow – treat others like you want to be treated – in helping to prevent harmful relationships before they even start.”

KDHE is in the early stages of launching a statewide media campaign using broadcast commercials on TV, radio and cable in addition to billboards and other media.



A billboard north of Winfield is part of the early stage statewide media campaign to support the ‘Choose Respect’ initiative.

Choose Respect events with KDHE are part of broader community prevention efforts by Choose Respect community agencies in nine U.S. cities. Projects in Hartford, Conn., Houston, Indianapolis, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, New York City, Phoenix, San Antonio, and Washington D.C., are also promoting the initiative’s themes and resources among 11 to 14 year-olds and their parents. Using both their own programs and Choose Respect’s online games and interactive learning tools, television and radio spots, activity ideas, streaming video clips and clickable quizzes, each community is working to raise awareness of the importance of respecting friends and peers, and teaching skills to help adolescents form healthy relationships.

The Choose Respect initiative is designed to encourage positive action on the part of adolescents to form healthy, respectful relationships. To learn more, go to www.chooserespect.org.